

Minutes
State Board of Education Study Session
Monday, September 20, 2004

The Arizona State Board of Education held a special Study Session at the Murphy Elementary School District #21, Board Room, 2615 West Buckeye Road, Phoenix, AZ. The meeting was called to order at 9:10AM.

Members Present

Ms. Nadine Mathis-Basha, President
Dr. Matthew Diethelm, Vice President
Ms. Armida Bittner
Ms. JoAnne Hilde
Superintendent Tom Horne
Ms. Joanne Kramer
Dr. John Pedicone

Members Absent

Ms. Evangelina "Conkie" Hoover
Dr. Michael Crow

Board Business

Pledge of Allegiance, moment of silence and roll call.

1. OPENING COMMENTS

Dr. Paul Mohr, Superintendent, Murphy Elementary School District, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Ms. Basha noted that we are addressing challenging topics where huge strides have been made with an incredible amount of work in our schools that should be acknowledged and commended, bringing us from norm-referenced testing to criterion, and fragmentation to alignment. Ms. Basha added that after seeing all the work that has been done to date, it is frustrating to see the AIMS scores and that is a reason it is included for discussion on today's agenda.

2. INTRODUCTIONS OF INVITED GUESTS

Ms. Basha welcomed and thanked the invited guests for their interest and participation. She asked each person to introduce themselves and state the organization they represent.

3. ROUNDTABLE ISSUE DISCUSSION

A. Presentation and Discussion Regarding State Intervention Development Within the AZ LEARNS Accountability System, Including, But Not Limited To:

1. The State Intervention Site Visit Draft
2. The Initial Draft of the State Intervention Matrix
3. Examples of Intervention
4. Update on the Request for Information for Public and/or Private Providers

Dr. Donna Lewis, Associate Superintendent, Accountability Division, Arizona Department of Education, stated that they are working collaboratively with the School Effectiveness Division taking their lead from the excellent foundation that has been laid with the Solutions Teams' standard as well as gathering comments from stakeholders. Dr. Lewis emphasized that this is a collaborative turn-around approach and noted that pursuant to A.R.S. §15-241 state intervention is developing its plan.

Ms. Tommie Miel, Education Program Administrator, State Intervention Section, Arizona Department of Education, presented drafts of the intervention site visit, evaluation matrix, appeal process, and community inventory. Ms. Miel noted that the appeals process is open right now and is the same as last year with the addition of recommendations regarding failing schools coming to

the State Board at a future meeting. (Please see materials packet for the full presentation by Ms. Miel)

Mr. Mike Smith, Arizona School Administrators, asked if a school appeals can they get a profile other than “failing” and if they don’t appeal is the site visit different?

Ms. Miel responded that if the school does not appeal they will get a site visit and the criteria are the same as those who do appeal. Dr. Lewis assured the group that there is personal contact with the schools throughout the process.

Mr. Pete Turner, Liberty School District, asked if the schools would be aware of what ADE is looking for during these site visits? Ms. Miel responded that this information will be taught at the workshops given by ADE and noted that the criteria will be reviewed today, as well.

Ms. Rosemary Gaona, ASSIST Coach, Tempe Elementary, was very positive and verified that they are implementing their school’s plan. She asked what more can be done if the needed growth is not seen?

Dr. Pedicone noted that all parties need to understand the process and the rules.

Mr. Andrew Morrill, Mountain View High School and AEA Vice President, stated that they are encouraged that this process seems to follow the Solutions Teams’ process. Communication is the key and must be done down to the classroom level and even to the home.

Ms. Janice Palmer, Arizona School Boards Association, clarified the appeals process and timeline noting that it is critical that each school with a failing label appeal by the September 30 deadline.

Ms. Miel noted that the Department will be advertising to make sure all schools will know to submit appeals by September 30. The recommendation will then be made to maintain the original profile or an alternate profile based upon their achievement. (See further information in presentation packet)

Mr. Smith clarified that if a failing school does not appeal, they still get a “failing school” site visit.

Ms. Miel added that the school must appeal in order to get an alternate label. Dr. Lewis also added that the Department would be in contact with all these schools, giving support and teaching them how to appeal.

Mr. Smith asked why a failing school should appeal and what does an alternate label do for the school? Ms. Miel explained that if a school appeals and receives an alternate label, they have completed the process. If the school appeals and does not make it through the process, they are still failing and will receive a second site visit. Workshops being held by the Department will include information and instructions in these areas as well. Regarding whether schools know what the review team is looking for when a school is visited, Ms. Miel noted that the schools know what is expected of them as far as the appeal is concerned. The team looks at student records, scored samples of student writings, attendance records, school communications, etc. They will also emphasize that communications need to be in all necessary languages. She added that at the site visit level the team will look at whether the school has implemented the School Improvement Plan or not. Ms. Miel noted that pilot visits are now going on referring to the sample letter and schedule sheet in the packet.

Ms. Bittner noted the importance to really see the community and suggested the Solutions Teams or coaches tour the community. Ms. Phyllis Schwartz, Associate Superintendent, School Effectiveness Division, Arizona Department of Education, stated that the coaches and Solutions Teams do this at the first visit.

Ms. Susan Carlson, ABEC, stated they are developing a website for parents to help them understand NCLB and AZ LEARNS, which will include information in Spanish.

Mr. Mike DeLaO, Arizona School Boards Association, is from Graham County which is one of the poorest communities with a wide-spread population where many do not have electricity, phones, etc. Mr. DeLaO noted there are many languages in Arizona other than Spanish and the children are not coming to school literate in any language.

Ms. Bittner stated the student may not necessarily be literate in either language (English or their native language) and this is the main problem. She noted that she is happy so many people are at this meeting and is confident the collaborative efforts of everyone will be the key to accomplishing the task.

Ms. Basha applauded ABEC for the efforts in getting information to parents. She added that inroads in these areas will be accomplished through multiple strategies.

Ms. Carlson asked if there were specialists in culture in the Solutions Teams that can assist districts with these specific cultural niches?

Ms. Schwartz replied that they are trying to accomplish this and are still working to recruit people from the outer communities.

Ms. Miel noted that questions have been added for parent input and that some schools noted that this is the first time they have been asked to give feedback. She added that these opportunities would be broadened. Ms. Miel stated the Community Inventory is only one piece of the data. The Matrix was then developed to evaluate all the data. This is also cross-referenced with the Standards for Improvement from the National Staff Development Council (NSDC).

Dr. Diethelm recommended involving local governing boards more in this process and asked where the Tutoring Funds can be used?

Superintendent Horne stated that the Tutoring Fund was originally for “failing” schools and expanded to “underperforming”. A proposal has been made recommending the monies also go to sophomores not passing AIMS.

Dr. Diethelm added that a disservice could be done to a school by being generous to them and giving them the alternate classification.

Mr. Horne agreed and stated that if a student fails AIMS state funds can provide at least 10 hours of tutoring for that student.

Ms. Kathy Moore, ASA, asked if the Board has discussed possible interventions when an alternate label is not recommended?

Ms. Miel responded that these are all possible interventions. The level of interventions from giving a little more time to assigning mentor/partner principals to assigning a turn-around principal is still under development.

Ms. Moore noted her concerns and cited the intervention process in the state of Maine, which is still ongoing after 15 years. She added that other states should be looked at who have gone through this process and keep in mind there is no silver bullet.

Ms. Miel added that they are beginning this process with the end in mind as they help the schools continue to be successful after the assistance is gone.

Ms. Schwartz noted they have attended a conference with ASCD to dialogue with other states, including Maine, where Arizona’s plan was applauded for bringing a group comprised of a broad base of stakeholders to design this intervention program. The hope is to prevent a roll-out/roll-back scenario that some states have experienced.

Mr. Pete Turner, Liberty District, asked about budgetary issues and where the funding will come from for the intervention staff.

Superintendent Horne stated the district must continue funding the school at the level it has been. ADE is looking at available funds from Proposition 301 to attract highly qualified personnel for this purpose as well. He added that some outside sources might also be willing to assist.

Mr. Turner noted that there are district contractual issues, locked budgets and that added expenses would be unreasonable. Mr. Horne responded that through advice from the Attorney General’s Office, ADE can say that districts are required to allocate the same budget to the school and the law provides that the State Board can require that some personnel be replaced. The contract issues then become the problem of the district. Mr. Horne stated that ADE would work with the districts to work out these issues with as few problems as possible, but this is the legal situation.

Mr. Smith complimented staff on the matrix stating that with this filled out along with the interview schedule, a clear picture of where the school is should emerge. He added that the request for the school budget and entitlements could be streamlined by asking where revenues have been applied toward the improvement plan and its implementation. He added that he is interested to see where we go from here.

Dr. Lewis welcomed the continued comments and Ms. Basha thanked the Department for this presentation noting the comments from the public are vital to this process.

At 10:45 AM the Board took a brief break and reconvened at 11:05 AM.

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B. Discussion Regarding the Arizona Academic Standards and the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS).

Ms. Basha opened this session stating that we need to take time to see where we are and what we are hoping to accomplish. She informed the group that she has requested the assistance of Dr. Michael Crow to assemble a team outside the State Board to look at the AIMS process. Ms. Basha added that today's Study Session is critical as we figure out the right questions to ask and that the question is not whether we are going to move forward with AIMS or not. She added that we are going to move forward. Many comments from the field have also indicated that we should stay the course. However, progress needs to be made in such a way that in 2006 we will know that the adults who are accountable in this process have done everything possible not to create artificial barriers. Ms. Basha noted that we would move ahead in a positive way.

Superintendent Horne noted he has made a proposal to the Legislature and Governor where all juniors who did not pass AIMS as sophomores (40,000 students) could receive intervention through the State Tutoring Fund. Mr. Horne noted they reviewed a \$10M proposal and it requires statutory change. Another question has arisen as to what this is going to do for students in K-9. The biggest area of concern is math, so ADE is beginning a math initiative similar to what was done for reading under Reading First. Mr. Horne identified 5 strategies and targeted funding. (See brief outline of initiative in materials packet). Two areas targeted by the Solutions Teams as problems in underperforming schools are not teaching to the standards and not using data to inform instruction.

Mr. Horne added that ADE could use help from the universities to research what other states with high stakes testing have done.

Dr. Pedicone stated his appreciation for this first step to begin to evaluate the disconnect in the process. He stressed that the process should not be dismantled or discarded, but an honest look at the test and the process are necessary to be successful with our children.

Ms. Hilde stated that we need to know how many students are expected to pass AIMS as sophomores and how many are expected to pass it as juniors. Ms. Hilde is concerned that students who don't pass will drop out long before they fail to pass AIMS. She asked how this issue is being addressed?

Dr. Diethelm asked how we upgrade what we're doing so that more students pass early? The standards and assessments are in place but the results tell us that we are not where we need to be.

Dr. Diethelm noted that once 90% of students are passing the first test, the standards need to be upgraded to move forward and become more competitive with the rest of the world. He noted that other test results from NAEP and Stanford correlate pretty well with the AIMS results and show that we have a lot of work to do.

Dr. Terri St. Michel, South Mountain High School, noted that these conversations have occurred before and she is concerned with how we go about “doing” what needs to be done. Many students have not yet had coursework to pass AIMS as sophomores, especially in math. She noted that intensive tutoring will work for math. By the end of this year’s junior students’ year we should see a marked difference in scores. She noted concern that with the writing portion of the test smaller class sizes could make a difference with this group as well as quality teachers (cited research on Nationally Board Certified Teachers). Dr. St. Michel stated that the challenge is to get these teachers to urban and rural schools. More teachers need the opportunity to go through the National Board Certification process and incentives to go to underperforming schools. Dr. St. Michel added that having a sample writing prompt would be helpful. She suggested that students who don’t pass AIMS as sophomores take the test at central sites in off-school time much like the SAT and ACT tests are given.

Mr. Marty Shultz, Pinnacle West Capitol Corporation and Arizona Public Service spoke from a business standpoint noting the high stakes for Arizona to raise the bar of achievement. He stated that the AIMS test should be consistent with the work force skill requirements and there must be a commitment to stick with this even though it is challenging because it is the right thing to do. Mr. Shultz cited that workplace values data analysis need to stay part of the math test. He listed items to consider as important strategies:

- Curricular alignment;
- Are kids serious about the test;
- Do teachers believe success on the test is related to their success in schools; the focus of professional educators needs to be evaluated;
- Intervention is important and is needed; what are the best and most cost-effective choices;
- Teacher salary schedule is not adequate; driving these higher is worthwhile; and
- Draw comparisons between Stanford 9 and AIMS results; over 90% of schools with high scores in both early and higher grades are in unified districts and it is time to align districts in a K-12 manner.

Dr. Deb Duvall, Mesa Public Schools and ABEC, noted that Mesa is looking at data on a student-by-student basis and at courses students are currently enrolled in to see if they can help the students do better. The breakdown in math test scores shows students enrolled in Geometry when they take AIMS, do better on geometry than algebra. Those not meeting standards in math did not answer the number sense questions correctly since these haven’t been taught since grade school. She noted that there is a difference of 6 questions between “falls far below” and “meets standard”. Students in “falls far below” need to know there is hope for them and this hope needs to come at every level – teacher to State Board.

Mr. Jay Kaprosy, Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, noted that the evaluation occurring in Mesa is exactly the purpose of AIMS. He added that students need to know that they can pass AIMS and that it is not a torture instrument to keep them from graduating. Mr. Kaprosy noted the following criteria that should be occurring:

- the data going to schools needs to be in a readable, useable format;
- we need to ask if there are systemic changes that need to occur;
- we need to look at what we’re doing to prepare our teachers;
 - universities should be introspective,
 - the greatest variable in a classroom is the teacher, and
- we need to focus on what it takes to get us there.

Ms. Ellen James, AEA, noted that the short commodity for teachers is time and that the math results are not a surprise as the process started backwards. Ms. James stated that teachers are invested in the standards and that standards-based instruction is a building process that starts at the bottom and works its way up. When evaluating if curriculum is aligned to standards, evaluators need to be sure they know it when they see it. Teachers need materials aligned to the standards, which takes time and money. She noted several areas that teachers need assistance in:

- meaningful data analysis that is broken down to the level that is needed;
- attendance is big and help is needed from the community;
- assistance from the universities on math instruction;
 - most elementary teachers are great at teaching reading and language arts but not so great at math
- don't forget the ELLs

Mr. Gary Knight, Apache Junction Associate Superintendent, stated that the "how to" meet the standards is the district's job. He is not opposed to high standards. Math standards were always exceedingly high and comparable to college entrance but because of only a 2-year math course requirement at high school, high school standards were pushed to the 8th grade. He noted that the AIMS math scores do not compare to SAT9 math and that we can't compare at high school because we no longer give SAT9 at high school. He advised to continue the combined test at the high school level even if we get to only 10% failure rate on AIMS statewide, as some communities will still have a 40% failure rate. Mr. Knight added that the math initiative being proposed won't be effective in time for this graduating class. Students in the 50th percentile in math on high school TerraNova should graduate until we figure out math.

Ms. Jeanette Harrison, Intel, noted three areas for attention:

- global standards;
- maintain communication that all students can pass the test; and
- send message that math is important no matter what a student is going to do after high school.

Ms. Harrison stated that individual attention for students is the only way to address this issue.

Ms. Paula Spratlen Mitchell, AEA, noted that individual attention is key and it would be great to have information like Mesa has pulled. She emphasized that if primary focus is kept on the students, the right solutions will be found.

Ms. Kathy Granillo-Beebe, Assistant Superintendent, Murphy Elementary District, stated that they have new articulated standards and there are some changes. She added that the question is whether these align to TerraNova and NAEP.

Mr. DeLeO added that we need to keep an eye on the dropout rate. Coursework taken when tests are administered needs to be looked at. Teachers are getting burned out. Mr. DeLeO stated that we should have AIMS but it should not label the kid.

Ms. Gaona added that the verbiage from AIMS tests should be the same verbiage in the standards. Students first need to understand what the question is asking. She noted that the data needs to follow the student for teachers to use it.

Dr. Jim Zaharis, Greater Phoenix Leadership, addressed the big picture and the fact that this effort was built on a political timeline rather than test development timeline and now we are trying to catch up. Dr. Zaharis agrees that it is essential to stay the course, however, he believes that work needs to be done in the spirit of continuous progress so we are not exhausting people and not defending things that shouldn't be defended. He noted that the attention has been gotten and there is nothing like a motivated learner. Dr. Zaharis pointed out the following:

- The Board's decisions are not classroom instructional decisions but are public policy decisions;
- There is a need for respect of continuous progress;

- Sequence is to look at student and content, measure the gap, focus instruction on the gap, increase time of that instruction to get mastery
 - This data needs to get into the hands of principals and teachers
 - Focused instruction on specific students in specific gaps is an effective way of moving performance quickly
- AIMS standards have to be at a level that all our children can perform
 - Oregon's certificate of initial mastery is worthy of exploration
 - Certificate of higher mastery that qualifies the student for post-secondary experience
 - A small part of compensation should be based on student academic performance
 - Applaud work that is completed at whatever level of achievement
- This is high stakes and education stops if this mastery is not achieved
- Test scheduling is a good idea
- Employers should request performance to see the levels of AIMS that have been passed
- Global competition demands cannot be discounted

Ms. Joanne Kramer asked if the Career Ladder districts perform better on AIMS? Dr. Zaharis responded that the districts scored higher on performance tests but was not sure if that was AIMS. Ms. Billie Enz, ASU Main, asked if all Career Ladder districts are equally distributed across high, middle and low socio-economic? Dr. Zaharis noted that a district like Mesa has all three in one town.

Ms. Kramer stated her concern is to find enough teachers to tutor the 40,000 students.

Dr. Duvall stated they are looking for available staff to work outside the school day and seeking assistance from community college and university students who are looking for part-time employment.

Dr. Zaharis agreed that the process of identifying students for tutoring should occur and cautioned using the word "tutoring" as focused instruction can be small groups intensified on critical elements that have been identified with a teacher. This process does not have to be one-on-one but does need to be focused.

Dr. Pedicone expressed appreciation for the good recommendations and agreed that it is best to put the best teachers where there is biggest need. He added that getting the best data has to be part of the agenda, as well as having the courage to respond to the data. Dr. Pedicone stated his concern regarding the number of questions between failing and passing and the need to look at why the kids can't be tested at the completion of the courses. He asked if there was a way to identify which parts need to be tested and not test again on areas that have been passed.

Ms. Bittner expressed her appreciation for the efforts to date and wants to talk about the 4th and 8th grade benchmarks and work at the lower grades at the same time as focusing on high school.

Ms. Basha concluded that this is a continuous process, we'll never be just done, and expressed her appreciation for the time invested in this process.

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No additional requests to speak were received from the general public at this time.

5. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 12:45 PM.